

Message Text

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TAGS: SREF

SUBJ: TRANSPORT OF PAROLED REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE USA

REF : BANGKOK 3256

1. AS VERIFIED SPONSORS FOR LAO REFUGEES BEGIN TO ARRIVE HERE WITH INCREASED FREQUENCY, WISH TO INFORM DEPARTMENT OF OUR CURRENT THINKING ON BEST WAY TO HANDLE THE TRANSPORT OF THE REMAINING LAO WITH "A" NUMBERS TO THE US

2. AT OUR INSTIGATION, ICEM, THE UNHCR AND THE RTG MOI HAVE BEEN EXPLORING THE IDEA OF STAGING LAO REFUGEES WHO ARE ABOUT TO DEPART THAILAND FOR THE US AT UNUSED BARRACKS AT UDORN AB. THIS PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT WILL HAVE SEVERAL ADVANTAGES IF IT MATERIALIZES. FIRST THE MEDICAL SCREENING CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED AT ONE LOCATION AND MORE IMPORTANTLY ICEM WOULD ACCEPT ON REIMBURSEMENT BASIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REFUGEES AS SOON AS THEY HAVE BEEN OUT-PROCESSED FROM THE STAGING CENTER, ELIMINATING EMBASSY INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSPORTING THEM FROM NORTHEAST THAILAND TO BANGKOK AS IS PRESENTLY THE CASE. IF THE STAGING AREA CONCEPT IS USED, WE WOULD BE USING THAI PROVINCIAL MEDICAL FACILITIES; THEREFORE, WE NEED PROMPT ANSWER TO REFTEL TO ASCERTAIN IF THIS IS ACCEPTABLE FROM AN INS STANDPOINT. THE COSTS OF X-RAYS, BLOOD TESTS, AND IMMUNIZATIONS WOULD BE ABOUT UNCLASSIFIED

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\$7.50 PER HEAD FOR ADULTS, LESS FOR CHILDREN NOT

REQUIRING X-RAYS.

3. ONCE THE REFUGEES ARE STAGED, WE WOULD HAVE THREE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS, TWO OF WHICH WOULD INVOLVE CHARTER AIRCRAFT:

OPTION 1: REFUGEES COULD BE BUSED TO BANGKOK AND THEN SET TO THE US VIA SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL AIRLINES TO EITHER LOS ANGELES OR NEW YORK.

OPTION 2: REFUGEES COULD BE BUSED TO BANGKOK AND SENT BY CHARTER AIRCRAFT TO EITHER LOS ANGELES OR NEW YORK DEPENDING ON LOCATION OF SPONSORS.

OPTION 3: REFUGEES COULD BE TRANSPORTED DIRECTLY FROM UDORN VIA PROPELLER AIRCRAFT (DC-6) TO LOS ANGELES OR NEW YORK. NOTE: THERE IS THE OPTION TO USE PROPELLER AIRCRAFT AT UDORN BUT NOT PASSENGER JETS.

4. WE WILL BE WORKING FURTHER WITH ICEM/BANGKOK IN DEVELOPING AND EXAMINING THESE OPTIONS. WE ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS NO OBJECTION TO REFUGEES ARRIVING BY CHARTER SO LONG AS WE PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT WITH AN AMPLE LEADTIME TO ENABLE SMOOTH PROCESSING OF REFUGEES UPON ARRIVAL AT A US AIRPORT AND PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR ONWARD TRANSPORTATION VIA COMMERCIAL MEANS TO SPONSORS IN THE US.

5. CHARTER OPTIONS WILL BE MORE COSTLY THAN MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES VIA COMMERCIAL AIRLINES. NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE INTERESTED IN THE CHARTER OPTIONS BECAUSE REFUGEES WILL MOVE OUT FASTER THAN UNDER PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS. ALSO IN THE EVENT NEW PAROLE NUMBERS ARE GRANTED, MOVING THE LAO BY CHARTER WILL BE A PILOT TEST OF THE FEASIBILITY OF EXPEDITIOUSLY MOVING LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE US IN A SHORT TIME-FRAME.

6. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT ICEM GENEVA AS NO OBJECTIONS IN PRINCIPLE TO CHARTER ARRANGMENTS. ICEM/
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BANGKOK WILL BE DEVELOPING THE ABOVE OPTIONS MORE FULLY. MEANWHILE, WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS.
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